Baboon liver transplant speech

Ladies and gentlemen,

Imagine the scene. It is every parent’s worst nightmare. The specialist has just told you that your six-year-old son Toby has liver cancer. While the doctor judges that a liver transplant would probably succeed, the cruelest blow is that animal liberationists are attempting to convince the public that such life-saving operations for innocent children are immoral.

My fellow citizens, the issue is whether we should support the transplanting of animal livers into human recipients. Like the overwhelming majority of Australians, most of us here present were overjoyed to learn, as reported in the Melbourne Observer of the 1st of March this year, that Dr Nemo had successfully transplanted the liver of an adult baboon into a ten-year-old girl and that subsequent experiments indicated an 80% chance of success. How outraged we were when the animal liberation lobby ranted and raved on the Tonight show two days later that Dr Nemo should be publicly castigated because animals have the same rights as humans.

My contention is that baboon liver transplants should be allowed under certain conditions. While animal liberationists continue to push their illogical argument, right-minded people recognise a distinction between animals and humans. More problematic, though, is the shortage of baboon numbers and their endangered status. I therefore propose a middle course: namely, transplanting livers of baboons should be permitted, but only for human recipients under the age of 18, for whom there is a minimum of 80% chance of success – that is, of the liver being accepted. So as not to deplete the number of baboons, a breeding program should be established, so that in the long term we have a ready supply of baboons. The reasons for limiting the transplanting of baboon livers into minors are as follows.

Firstly – and, ladies and gentlemen this needs to be stressed emphatically – animals are not humans. That is, they DO NOT have the same rights as humans. If they did, as animal liberationists allege, then shearsers are guilty of assault of sheep and dairy farmers of cattle, and every time you or I go to the butcher, we are guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. What is it saying about us as a community when we take seriously and even give substantial media space to those who oppose this life-saving treatment? Members of the audience (or should I say, fellow animal murderers?), just look at the clothes and the shoes you are wearing. The reality is that we use animals to benefit us and we are certainly not abusive or murderous for doing so.

This leads to my second point, which is that our use of animals has, in recent decades, extended to farming animals for medical purposes. How many millions of human lives have been saved in the last few generations, including those of animal liberationists, by scientific discoveries through experimentation on animals, including chimpanzees? Furthermore, we as a community already crossed the ethical divide of using animal organs (or parts of them) to save humans when we began to use pig valves to repair human hearts. Using baboon livers is merely a logical extension of this sort of practice.
The only valid argument that the animal liberationists raise is that harvesting the livers of living baboons could destroy an already endangered species, one which, as reported in *The Melbourne Observer* on 10 May, has seen its numbers in the wild halve in the last decade. However, because the survival of the species is so important, we would currently limit transplants only to children, because such operations have a high chance of success. Just as any farmer with half a brain does not send the entire flock to the abattoir but saves some sheep to breed next year’s lambs, the last thing doctors would want to do is endanger or destroy the future supply of healthy baboon livers for transplanting. The medium to long-term solution, namely breeding baboons, will obviate the need for selecting baboons from the wild. Dr Sim, the world-renowned primate expert, argued in the Melbourne Observer in April of this year that spare baboons from the breeding program would be available for reintroduction into the wild to boost the numbers of baboons. I therefore must ask the question of animal liberationists: apart from talk, what solution are you really offering to save baboons?

In conclusion, I urge all of you present who truly care not only about our precious children but also about baboons to write to your local Members of Parliament in support of the position I have outlined today, namely that transplanting of baboon livers to save the lives of children be permitted. Furthermore, a breeding program of baboons should be established both as a source of livers and as a means of replenishing baboons in the wild. Animal liberationists, it is an incontrovertible truth that human lives are more valued than those of animals; if, heaven forbid, one of your children is diagnosed with liver disease, will you still continue to oppose transplanting of livers from baboons?